60p

THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

Pleiades contact
Prophecies of the Virgin
American lake monsters
The evil Gilles de Rais
Listening to leys

80

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THE Unexplained
MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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In next week's issue

Reports of people disappearing and of mysterious lights and creatures emerging from 'nowhere' often centre on particular places. In a new series on **Window areas** we describe these strange doorways into the unknown. Continuing **The Meier case** we examine the photographs taken by farmer Billy Meier, the claims made for them, and the results of independent analysis. Can people bring about what they want through subconscious ESP? And how far does this idea explain certain runs of 'luck'? In **Extra-sensory perception** we offer an explanation of how psi works in everyday life – with some amazing instances of its power. **American lake monsters** compares a number of monster sightings that show striking similarities. And in **Leys** we look at the fascinating results of infra-red, radio and Kirlian monitoring of ancient sites.

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Lake monsters of the New World

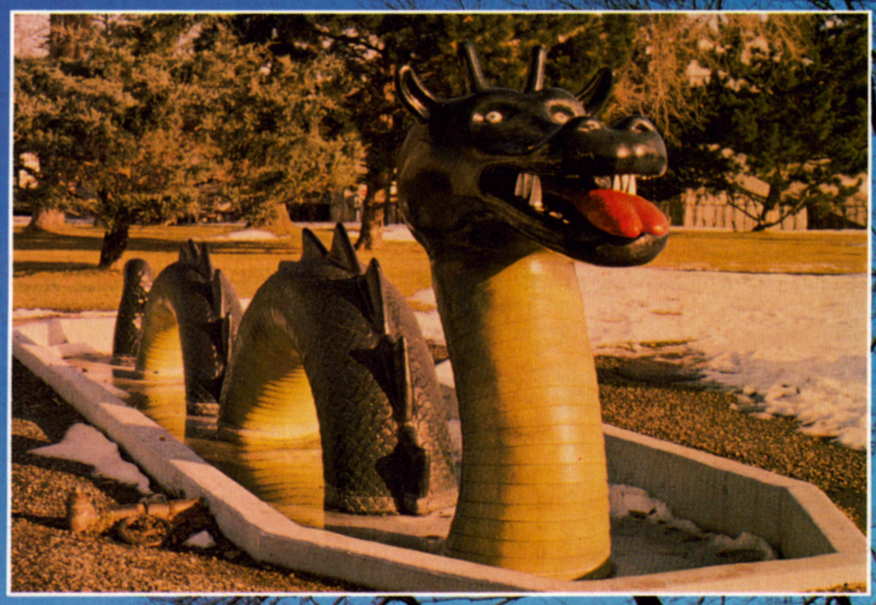
Thousands of lakes are scattered across North America – and from many come tales of huge creatures, rivalling the legends of the Loch Ness monster and the sea serpents. PETER COSTELLO tells some of the stories of Nessie's transatlantic cousins

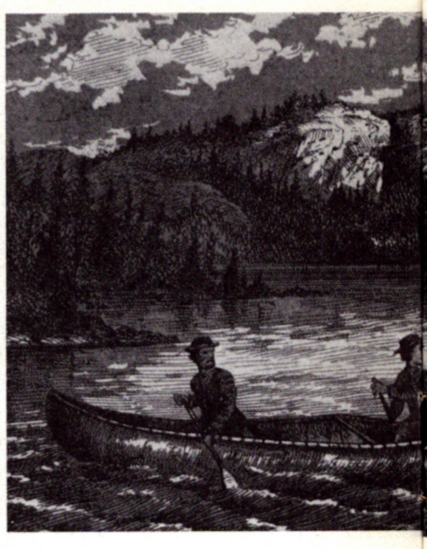
THE LAKES OF NORTH AMERICA, both in the United States and in Canada, have produced more reports of monsters than any other continent. More than 90 lakes and rivers are credited with being haunts of 'unidentified swimming objects'. Few of these reports are backed up with anything as concrete as photographs or ciné film. Most of them remain unexplained, some of the most intriguing of modern zoological mysteries. If there are so many creatures at large in these lakes, what are they and how do they manage to remain so elusive?

Reports of American lake monsters have a very long history. Naturally enough, the original inhabitants of the continent, the Indians, had many legends of large water monsters. As with all folklore, their graphic details may well conceal something very real.

The Mic-Mac Indians of the Nova Scotia area believed in a 'fabulous snake', which was similar to one described by the Algonquin further west. The Iroquois of upper New York state had a monster called Onijore. In Indiana, the Potawatomi believed in a monster in Lake Manitou on the Wabash River; in the early 19th century they objected to the erection of a mill that would have disturbed the creature's way of life.

Lake Ontario, straddling the Canada/United States border, lies under a sheet of winter ice. Occasional sightings of monsters have been made here and in other Great Lakes. But the most frequently reported lake creature is Ogopogo, a denizen of Lake Okanagan in British Columbia. The model of Ogopogo (inset) is part of the lake shore dwellers' publicity





Above: the Lake Utopia monster pursues a canoe in this contemporary drawing from an issue of the *Canadian Illustrated News* of 1872. According to the highly coloured account of the witnesses, the monster had 'bloody jaws'

Left: north-eastern North America, a region once covered by glaciers, which gouged thousands of lakes out of the land. Have prehistoric aquatic animals escaped extinction in these sheltered waters?

Below: Lake Champlain, the reputed home of the Champ, who, whether he exists or not, enjoys legal protection from hunters

These Indian tribes were grouped around the area of the Great Lakes. Further west, in the Rocky Mountain states, there were other legends. Among the Shawnee there was a legend of a great reptile, which was killed by a magician with the aid of a young girl – like the legend of St George and the Dragon. The Kalapuya Indians of the Willamette River in Oregon believed in a monster called Aturki, which lived in the lakes, rivers and pools of that region. An anthropologist remarked that 'those who saw it described it as resembling a seal or a sea otter.' Were these mere myths? Or descriptions of extraordinary but real animals?

The earliest reports, as distinct from legends, come from the first decades of the 19th century. It is often said that the first report of an American lake monster was made by the great French explorer of Canada, Samuel de Champlain, in 1609, when he discovered the great lake in Vermont now named after him. But this is not so: this is one 'report' that can safely be ascribed to an error on the part of a journalist. The story has been taken up by every writer on Lake Champlain since the error was made in 1960. Champlain does indeed mention a frightful water monster, but that was supposed to haunt the sea coast of the St Lawrence estuary, which is far to the north-east.

One of the pioneers of sea serpent research, Constantin Samuel Rafinesque (see page 91), noted that there was a tradition of 'a great Water Snake', which lived in a lake near Philadelphia. But he also collected reports of newer sightings:

> On the 3rd of July, 1817, one was seen in Lake Erie, three miles [5 kilometres] from land, by the crew of a schooner, which was 35 or 40 feet [10.5 or 12 metres] long, and one foot [30 centimetres] in diameter; its colour was dark mahogany, nearly black. This account is very imperfect, and does not even notice if it had scales; therefore it must remain doubtful whether it was a snake or a fish. I am inclined to believe it was a fish.

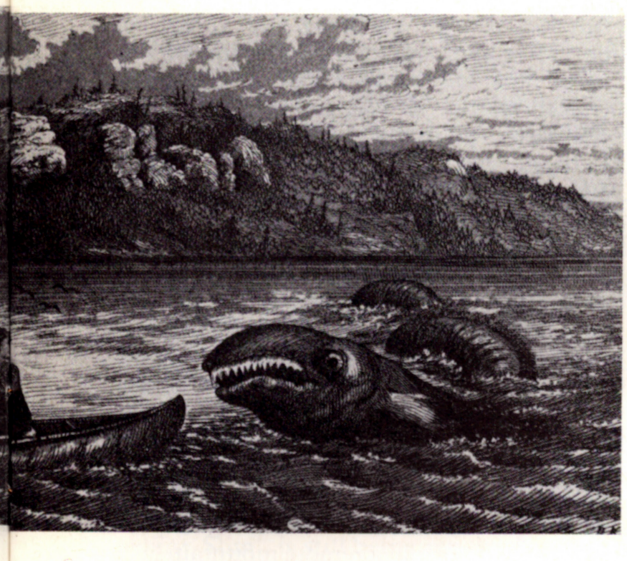
In 1819 the animal was seen again, 'and described to be of a copper colour, with bright eyes, and 60 feet [18 metres] long'. Shooting at it seemed to have no effect: whether because it was protected by scales or because the marksmanship was poor.

At this time the New England sea serpent was taken very seriously. A report of a monster in Lake Ontario (with which Lake Erie connects) was even dignified by publication in a German scientific journal in 1835.

Monsters in limbo

Soon lake monsters joined sea serpents in that limbo to which 'respectable' journals consign them nowadays. No one was to take them so seriously again for a long time. They became a suitable topic for humorous journalism and for hoaxes.

During 1855 Silver Lake in New York state was the scene of a great sensation: a 'sea serpent' had been sighted in the lake. There were numerous reports of sightings and the local press took up the tale. Over the next couple of years the sightings faded away. Then there was a fire at the local hotel, and in the attic volunteer firemen discovered the remains of the 'sea serpent'. It was a dummy, kept afloat with compressed air, which the hotel owner had made to boost his business. Local people were angry at first; later the perpetrator of the hoax was forgiven. Today the town of Perry holds a periodic sea serpent



Below: the skyline of Buffalo, New York state, rises above the waters of Lake Erie. Sightings of monsters in the lake date from the early 19th century – but they occurred before the severe pollution of the lake

Bottom: Naitaka, the monster spirit of Lake Okanagan, depicted in a rock carving made by the Shushwap Indians. When Indians travelled on the lake, they would drop a chicken or pup into the waters as an offering to Naitaka: failure to do so would incur his wrath

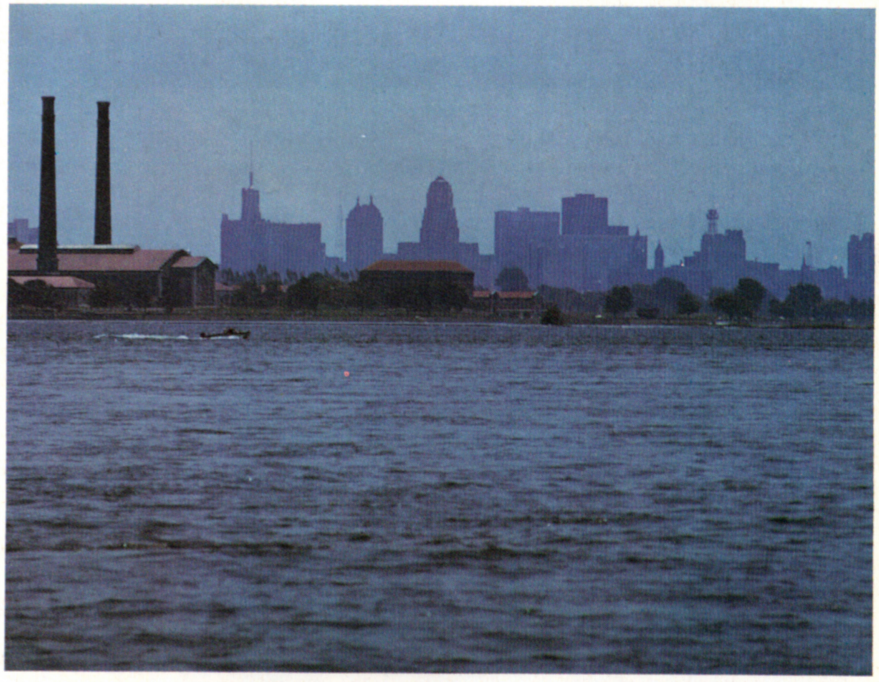
festival to commemorate the hoax.

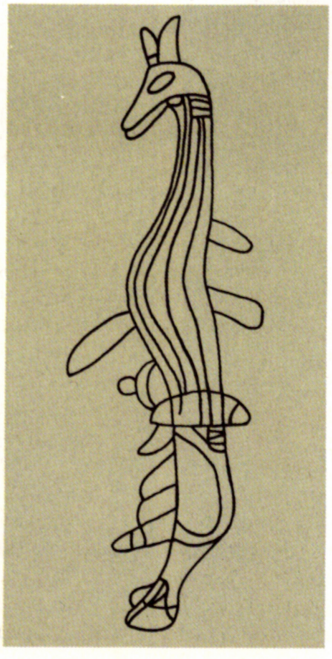
Journalists in America were often responsible for creating instant folklore. In the 1830s, for instance, there came a series of reports from the lakes of Indiana in the Middle West. There had been, of course, earlier Indian legends. But then came reports, published in the Logansport newspaper, that white settlers had also been seeing monsters. These reports were investigated a century later by a professor of history at Indiana University. Donald Smalley discovered that they may well have been a journalistic 'joke'. As the last Indians were moved out of the state, the reports faded away.

In Canada, too, in areas then on the frontier, there were many reports. The most striking of these came from Lake Utopia, in New Brunswick, in 1867. Lumbermen employed at a mill on the lake were surprised to see some object splashing about in the water. The report that it was a large animal caused great excitement. In 1872 the monster was written up in the *Canadian Illustrated News* with an astonishing woodcut of the creature curling through the water in pursuit of two men in a canoe. It had a head as large as a barrel, 'snapping its bloody jaws in a most horrible manner'. The monster was said to appear soon after the winter ice had broken up, which brought many visitors to the lake in March each year in the hope of seeing it.

One witness in the early 1950s was a Mrs Fred McKillop. Alone one day, she saw a large black shape churning up the water, and moving backwards and forwards at great speed.

For some scientists, anxious to explain away reports of lake monsters, this churning of the water holds a clue to what some 'monsters' might be. In Norway it was found that many reports came from mountain lakes





on the shores of which there were saw mills. On one famous occasion one of these 'monsters' was investigated by a policeman after it had surfaced in a patch of churning water. It turned out to be a great mass of sawdust and other vegetable rubbish, lifted to the surface of the water by the expanding gases created by its own rotting.

Were the Lake Utopia monster sightings caused by masses of decaying vegetation? But if so, what was it that chased the Indians? What of the reports from other lakes? What of the descriptions of long-necked creatures? Theories of this kind have to be seen in a wider context of reports from all over the North American continent, and especially from the Rocky Mountains and the Great Lakes region. There are no easy explanations that can cover *all* these sightings.

The reports of lake monsters in North America fall into a curious pattern. Nearly all are from mountain lakes, or from the rivers and lakes connected directly with them,

Above: the remains of a water monster? In November 1970 this rotting carcase was washed ashore at Mann Hill Beach, Massachusetts. Long-necked and weighing between 15 and 20 tonnes, it was described as being like a camel without legs. However, it was later identified as a basking shark, which had acquired a serpent-like form when the cartilaginous parts of its body had rotted away. This, however, was a sea creature; no large animal living in the lakes is known that could give rise to the numerous reports of lake monsters

which include the Great Lakes.

An apparent exception to this was a series of reports of a monster in Alkali Lake (now Walgen Lake), which lies in the grasslands of Nebraska. The first reported sighting was in the summer of 1921, when a farmer saw a creature that spouted water 15 to 20 feet (4.5 to 6 metres) high. Several other reports followed. In one incident, five witnesses were said to have seen a brownish creature 'with the shape of a huge fish'. They could not see its head or tail, but the part they could see rose about 20 inches (50 centimetres) out of the water and was 12 to 15 feet (3.5 to 4.5 metres) long. They estimated that the total length of the beast must have been 20 feet (6 metres) or more.

Making the news

Unfortunately, these accounts all came through a journalist, John G. Maher. He was local correspondent for the *New York Herald* and, as he himself later confessed, was not above making up news when the real thing was in short supply. However, his imaginative accounts of the Alkali Lake monster created an interest that got out of hand. A local businessmen's association tried to mount an expedition to catch the monster, but were refused permission to use the lake. The monster even found its way into the material collected by a government agency, the Federal Writers' Folklore Project. Maher gave accounts of alleged sightings of the monster from earlier years. (But he did not mention that in 1889 the lake had dried up completely – without revealing any trace of a monster.)

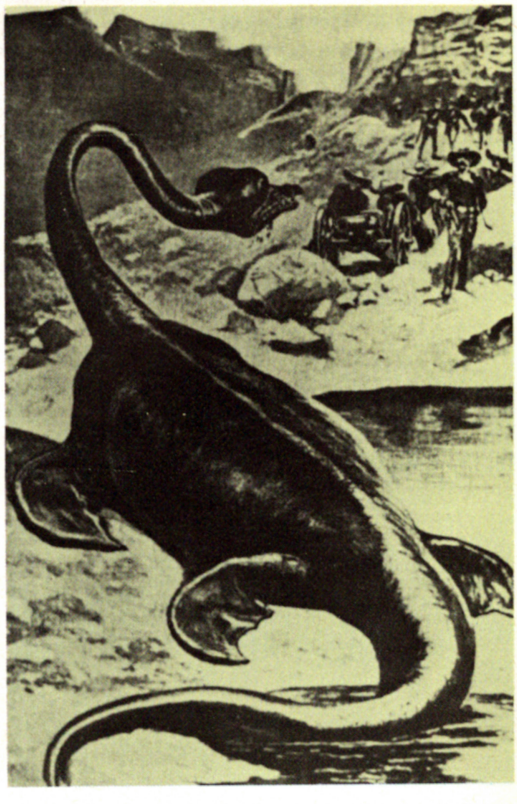
Many of the sightings from the numerous American lakes are single reports, often from the 19th century. But a very few lakes have a long continuous history of sightings running up to the present. And after discounting journalistic invention, the accumulation of evidence, though scattered and varied, is impressive and convincing in its totality.

One area with a long history of reports is the lake district of Wisconsin. There have been sightings in the four lakes that ring Madison, and in Waubeau, Red Cedar, Pewaukee and Elkhart Lakes. Though some of the sightings occurred in recent times it is difficult to know how much credence to place in them as they have not been properly investigated.

Of far greater interest are the reports of large water animals in the mountain states. Rumours of lake monsters in the Rockies were so common in the 19th century that they inspired sensational science fiction – such as *The monster of Lake La Metrie*, published in 1899. This story ends with a unit of the US Cavalry destroying a prehistoric plesiosaur in a remote mountain lake with a field gun.

This unlikely tale could have been based on fact, for there were many sightings of something very like a plesiosaur in several lakes. In Utah, such reports began after the Mormons had established themselves, though in the same region there had been earlier Indian legends of water creatures. The late 19th-century reports concerned Utah Lake and, especially, Bear Lake. A journalist writing in 1883 noted: 'There is abundant testimony on record of the actual existence at the present day of an immense aquatic animal of some species as yet unknown to science.'

In 1871 it was claimed that a young monster had been captured at Fish Haven, on Bear Lake – 'a creature some 20 feet [6 metres] long, which propelled itself through



Right: the fictional monster inhabiting Lake La Metrie, about to meet its death at the hands of the US Cavalry. The saga of this relic of a prehistoric age appeared in *Pearson's Magazine* in 1899

the water by the action of its tail and legs.' Earlier reports spoke of a 3-foot [1-metre] neck, flippers and brown otter-like fur and a head that suggested a 'walrus without tusks'. The Shoshone Indians had said the animals used to come ashore.

These extraordinary reports faded away after the 1880s. From Payette Lake in the mountains of Idaho there were more reports in the 1930s – perhaps stimulated by the Loch Ness sensation. But in the summer of 1941 there was a sudden spate of reports. John McKay saw a large animal with a 'long dark body' and humps. A few months later a periscope-like head and neck were seen. These reports were not publicised. Then a local businessman described to the press his sighting of a 'snub-nosed crocodile' 50 feet (15 metres) long. This creature, nicknamed 'Slimy Slim', is still being reported. In June 1977 two people fishing in a boat in Cougar Bay noticed what looked like the wake of a boat – yet no boat had passed within the previous 10 minutes. Then they spotted a three-humped black object, 30 feet (9 metres) long, moving fairly fast.

Gary S. Mangiacopra, who has investigated these reports, suggests that the monster may well be some evolved form of elephant seal. This suggestion, however, scarcely accounts for the reports of humps that feature in so many of the sightings.

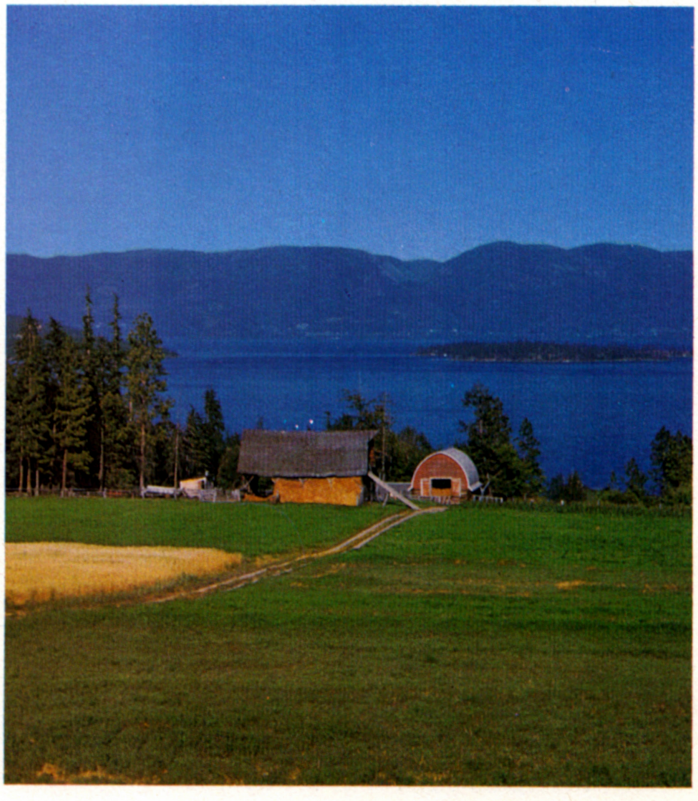
Reports of crocodile-like creatures have come from Folsom Lake in California, from lakes in the Trinity Alps, in the same state, and from many other places in the western states. However, Flathead Lake in Montana is the most interesting. In 1885 the captain of a lake steamer, the *U.S. Grant*, saw what he thought was another boat bearing down on him and then realised that it was a large whale-like animal. One of his passengers fired on it before it sank out of sight. In 1919 passengers on another boat, the *City of Polson*, saw what they thought was a log moving across the path of the ship: then they saw that it was an animal swimming away from the vessel.

During the following decades there were numerous reports, many of which were published by the editor of the *Flathead Courier*, Mr Paul Fugleberg. His enthusiasm kept the story fresh for a long while. He had a theory that the monster might be a giant sturgeon. This seems unlikely as there is no evidence that such fish have ever bred in the lake. Only *once* has a sturgeon been taken from the lake – and that may have been brought there as a stunt, to publicise the quality of the fishing.

On page 1610: the investigators set out to snare the lake monsters

A sturgeon (below) that came from Flathead Lake, Montana, lending colour to the theory that these fish give rise to monster reports. But this specimen was probably put into the lake (bottom right) to publicise it among local fishermen

Bottom left: the lakes of western North America. Mountain lakes seem to be the preferred haunts of giant water creatures



A diabolical obsession

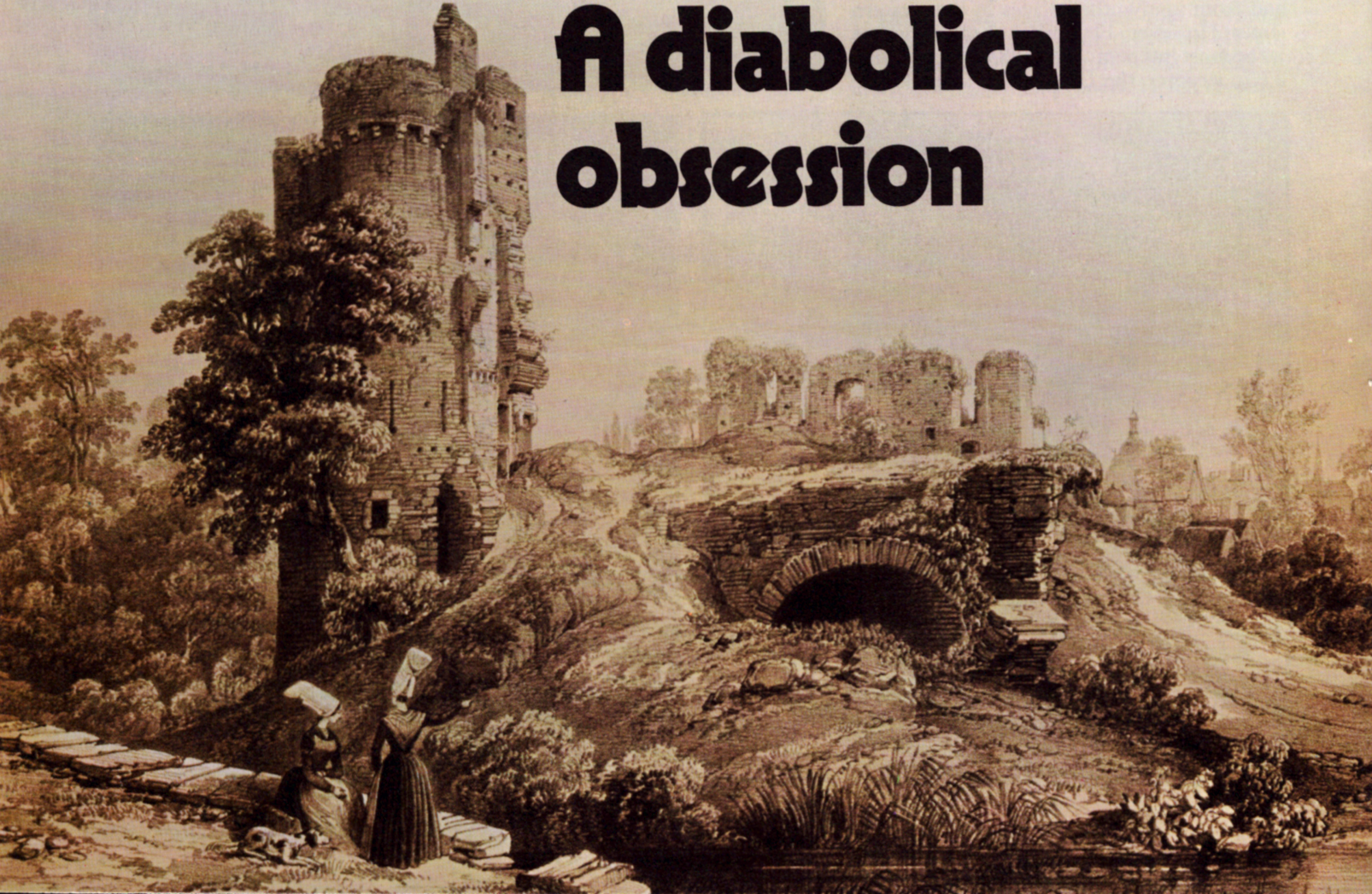
Gilles de Rais was a hero who fell from grace – accused of the vilest acts of perversion and of mass child murder. PAUL BEGG tells the story of this famous French nobleman whose trial exposed him as an infamous criminal

GILLES DE LAVAL, Baron of Rais (or Retz), is one of the most infamous figures in French history, although he was destined by birth for a most distinguished career. He was born in 1404 in the ominously named Black Tower at the castle of Champtocé in Anjou, in western France. He was the heir to a fortune that he later multiplied many times through inheritance and marriage until he was effectively the ruler of what amounted to a kingdom. He acquired fame and glory in battle and was the foremost champion of Joan of Arc, with whom he raised the siege of Orleans on 7 May 1429. At the age of 25, on 17 July 1429, he was made a Marshal of France.

Within two years of Joan of Arc's execution in 1431, Gilles de Rais, then aged 29, a man who had never known anything but fortune and fame, and who indulged his every whim, had begun to reveal himself as a sexual pervert and a child murderer on a mass scale; in all, he is reputed to have killed between 140 and 200 kidnapped children. Some estimates suggest that as many as 300 children died at his hands or on his instructions, but this figure, though possible, is considered improbable.

Right: Gilles de Rais (pronounced Rah-ees) was labelled 'the vampire of Brittany' in a book written at the start of this century. An illustration depicts him watching ghoulishly as a boy is about to be killed by a henchman

Below: the ruins of the castle at Machecoul where many of de Rais's debaucheries and killings took place. The first of his victims actually known by name – 12-year-old Jean Jeudon – disappeared there



Below right: Joan of Arc. De Rais was a champion of the heroine of France and fought at her side during the historic siege of Orleans

Below: Gilles de Laval, Baron de Rais, in his prime. He achieved the high rank of Marshal of France at the early age of 25. No one could guess that his future held disgrace

Bottom right: Charles VII of France. It was to secure the throne for Charles that Joan of Arc and Gilles de Rais joined forces in war

Whether or not Gilles had always nurtured his peculiar tastes is unknown. The general brutality of war may have concealed his psychopathic nature, and with the coming of peace and the lack of an outlet for his murderous instincts he may have turned his attention to children for the first time.

De Rais was discreet in his activities. His victims were procured for him by his cousins, Gilles de Sillé and Robert de Briqueville, and there was an ample supply from which to choose. The long years of war had left hundreds of children homeless and parentless and large bands of them wandered from town to town.

The first victim whose name is known was 12-year-old Jean Jeudon, an apprentice of a local furrier who allowed de Sillé and de Briqueville to send the boy to take a message to de Rais's castle at Machecoul. He was never seen again.

De Rais soon gathered together an intimate circle of procurers, some of whom joined him in his perverted pleasures. Wherever Gilles went, children disappeared. Parents who knew or suspected the worst had no choice but to suffer their grief in silence. This was partly because Gilles de Rais was a very powerful man, but mainly because the privileged aristocracy cared little for the welfare of the peasants and their offspring. They were thought of as nothing more than cattle. In October 1437, for example, when the bones of about 40 children were being removed from a tower in the castle of Champtocé, Robert de Briqueville arranged for two noble ladies to observe the progress of the horrible spectacle. They were quite amused. They may have wondered at de Rais's sexual tastes, but certainly they displayed no shock or horror at the brutal death of so many helpless children.

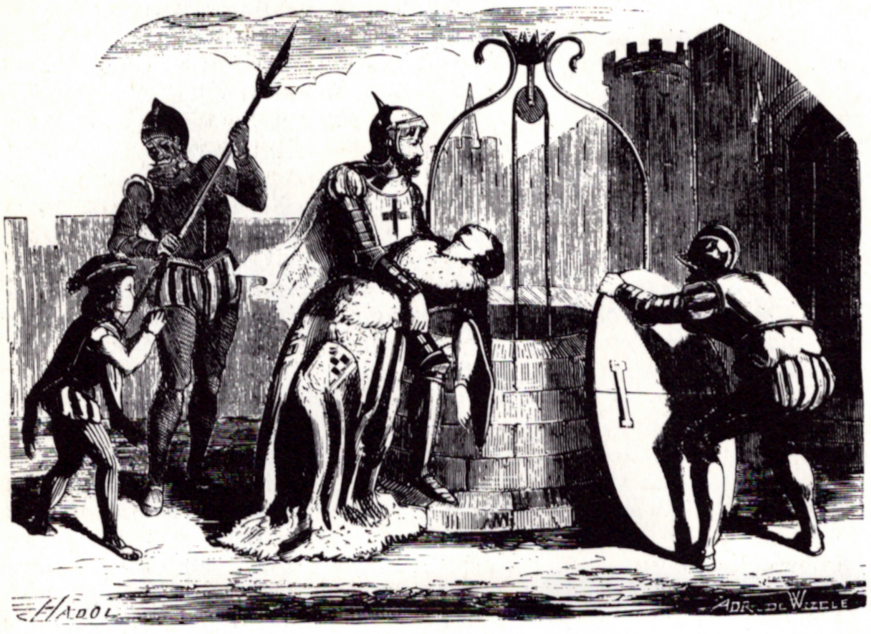
Victims turned accomplice

There were two projects in which de Rais had a special interest and into which he poured money. One was his own chapel, the Chapel of the Holy Innocents. Whether he took pleasure in, or even recognised, the black irony of his choice of title is unknown. The *Mémoire des héritiers* (a list of complaints against Gilles compiled by his family several years after his death, when they were trying to recover his confiscated lands) says of this chapel that no one could 'remember or believe that they had ever seen such superfluity, such excess, such unreasonable expenditure in the chapel of a prince or a king of France'. To this chapel he brought the best-looking choir boys, two of whom, André Buchet and another called Rossignol, he sexually seduced and who subsequently became actively involved with his crimes.

His other favourite project was the presentation of a mystery play in which one character represented de Rais himself at the very height of his fame and glory. The play, *Le mistèru du siège d'Orléans*, was huge, with no less than 140 speaking parts, anything up to 500 extras and a great many sets. The cost was astronomical and it was de Rais who covered most of it.

Gilles de Rais had possessed a fortune greater than anyone else in Europe, but it disappeared, squandered on these and other elaborate and often insane schemes. The rot had begun to set in as early as 1429, when he began selling properties on the periphery of his estates. By 1433 he had no lands left, except some belonging to his wife in Poitou, and two castles in Anjou.

The need for ready cash began to obsess de Rais. By 1435 he had sold off most of his lands and was reduced to selling personal possessions. These included his most precious relic, a silver head of Saint Honoré. Alarmed, the various branches of the de Rais



family met in June 1435 to consider ways of forcing Gilles to curb his spending. The following month the King issued an edict forbidding any subject to enter into contract with him. In desperation he turned to alchemy as the means of his salvation.

De Rais sought the assistance of Eustache Blanchet, a priest from the Saint Malo district who had entered his service in 1435, presumably in connection with the Chapel of the Holy Innocents. Early in 1439 Blanchet went to Italy and was there introduced to Francesco Prelati, a young clerk in minor orders who was learned in alchemical arts and, it was claimed, could conjure a demon called Barron to do his bidding. Blanchet persuaded Prelati to return to France with him.

Prelati proved to be a consummate showman who could raise de Rais's expectations of producing gold by alchemical means and then gently deflate them with a series of ingenious excuses. De Rais fell under Prelati's spell and became increasingly dependent on his advice.

Meanwhile, Gilles's enemies were gathering. Chief among them were Jean V, Duke of Brittany and Gilles's liege lord, and the Duke's chancellor, Jean de Malestroit, Bishop of Nantes. They coveted de Rais's lands, which bordered the Duke's and were of strategic importance, and purchased some of them in defiance of the King's prohibition. The lands could be redeemed by de Rais within six years – which gave the Duke and his chancellor a strong interest in seeing that he was in no position to do so.

It was in May 1440 that Gilles de Rais made the most senseless move of his life and played into the hands of those who worked to bring him to book. He was particularly fond of the castle of Saint-Etienne-de-Mer-Morte but had recently been forced to sell it to Geoffroi Le Ferron, treasurer to Jean V. Gilles now decided to repossess it; in doing so, he violated ecclesiastical property, offended Church law by imprisoning a priest and, by dispossessing Geoffroi, attacked a member of Jean V's household and transgressed the rights of feudal possession.

Jean V imposed a heavy fine on Gilles, knowing full well that there was no hope that it would be paid. Meanwhile de Malestroit, Jean's Chancellor, ordered an official enquiry into de Rais's affairs. Among those from whom evidence was collected were some of the people whose children had disappeared. The findings of this investigation were made public on 29 July 1440. Jean de Malestroit revealed that he had found that de Rais:

> . . . with certain of his accomplices had slaughtered, murdered and massacred in the most odious fashion several young boys, and that he had taken with these children pleasure against nature. . . .

On 19 September, Gilles de Rais appeared before Jean de Malestroit in an upper room of the castle of La Tour Neuve. Gilles seems to have thought that the whole affair would be resolved by some kind of gentleman's agreement. It was not until 8 October, when the trial proper began, that he appears to have realised the full extent of the charges against him and the strength of the evidence.

Gilles's response to his realisation of the position was an outburst of wild temper. He withdrew all his earlier statements, denied the charges against him, rejected the court's

Above: de Rais depicted as a wife killer in a book published in Paris in 1879. A short time after his trial, Gilles became identified with the legend of Bluebeard, and false stories arose of his mass wife murders. His transformation into a figure of legend shows what a great impact he made on his times

Right: a highly romantic picture of Bluebeard painted at the end of the 19th century. The Breton legend of Bluebeard was already old at the time of de Rais's trial, but his story of lurid crime became interwoven with it

Further reading

Jean Benedetti, *Gilles de Rais, the authentic Bluebeard*, Peter Davies 1971

J.K. Huysmans, *Down there*, Dover 1973

D.B. Wyndham Lewis, *The soul of Marshal Gilles de Rais*, Eyre and Spottiswoode 1952

right to try him, and refused to take the oath.

Over the following days the hearing was adjourned and otherwise delayed for a number of reasons until 13 October 1440, when, in an atmosphere charged with drama and emotion, the horrifying charges against de Rais were publicly voiced. Foremost among these were that:

> . . . for fourteen years, more or less, every year, every month, every day, every night . . . the said Gilles de Rais, possessed by the Evil One, forgetting his salvation, took, killed and cut the throats of many children, boys and girls. . . . [he] held discourse with magicians and heretics. . . .

Gilles refused to answer the charges. He said his judges were 'thieving rogues who took bribes', that 'he would rather be hanged than answer their questions, and that it was intolerable that he should be brought before them.'

It must be said that de Rais did have a point. The court was far from impartial. Few of its members did not know de Rais, most had done business with him, and many stood to profit from his downfall.

The judges adjourned to give Gilles the opportunity to reconsider. Faced with his recalcitrance, they had formally excommunicated him. This period gave his accusers the opportunity to impress upon de Rais the advantages of a confession and the accompanying absolution of the Church.

We do not know what arguments were used or what pressures were brought to bear on him but when Gilles reappeared in court he was the picture of the perfect penitent. With the exception of the accusation that he had invoked demons, Gilles de Rais fully admitted the charges on his indictment. His excommunication was revoked.

On 25 October Gilles de Rais again stood in the upper room of La Tour Neuve and was pronounced guilty of 'perfidious, heretical apostasy and the invocation of demons'. He was sentenced to be hanged and burned. In view of his contrite attitude, the court allowed his body to be consigned to the flames only after he was dead from hanging. They also permitted the remains to be buried in a church of his choice.

Two of his henchmen were burned and their ashes scattered; another was fined and banished for life; an old procuress, Perrine Martin, hanged herself in her cell; and Prelati was sent to prison for life but escaped, only to be hanged later for further crimes.

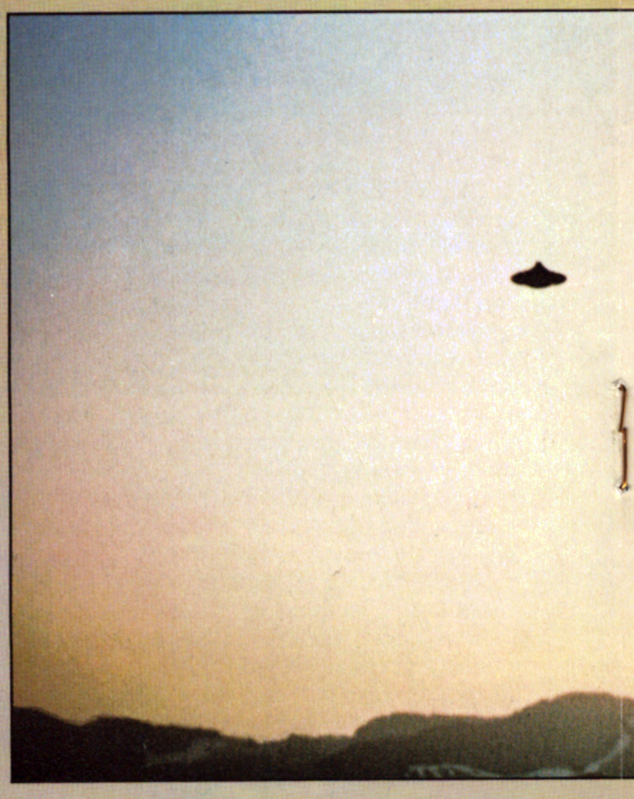
Throughout the trial Gilles de Rais denied that the murders had been perpetrated as part of any witchcraft or alchemical ceremony. Some scholars doubt that this was true, but there seems to be no real reason for de Rais to have lied. As he said himself, 'I have told you greater things than this, and enough to hang ten thousand men.'

Both because of the enormity of his crimes, and because of his position as a vassal of the Duke of Brittany, the story of Gilles de Rais became in time interwoven with the far older Breton legend of Bluebeard, which was based on the career of Comorre the Cursed, a sixth-century Breton chief. However, the actions of Gilles are fully documented in the reports of his trial and, although some scholars have disputed the extent of his crimes, there is no doubt that he must go down in history as one of the most prolific and sadistic of mass murderers.

Below left: an 18th-century miniature of the execution of Gilles de Rais. Because of his repentance, de Rais did not have to go to the flames alive: the court allowed him to be hanged first

Below: the castle of Jean V, Duke of Brittany. The Duke was one of Gilles de Rais's chief enemies and was instrumental in bringing him to trial. His motives were not all pure: he wanted to acquire lands belonging to de Rais

Billy Meier's tales of meetings with space people are not marked by restraint. PETER BROOKESMITH recounts more of these amazing claims – and describes the intellectual contortions of Meier's supporters

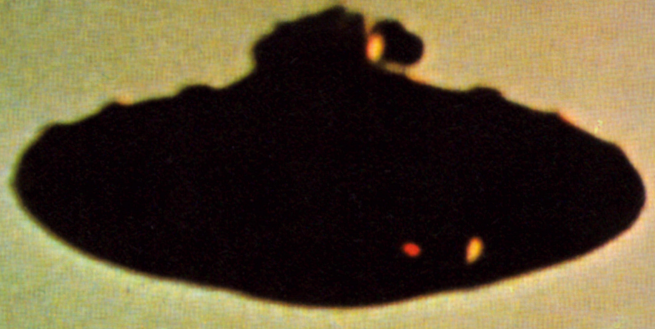


Right: a Pleiadean craft, enabled to make its rendezvous with Meier by detecting his 'brain wave patterns'. According to the Pleiadeans, this process 'normally enables our computer/auto-pilot to direct our beam ship to the exact location without interference'

A mass of contradictions

SWISS FARMER BILLY MEIER'S claim to have had over 130 meetings with cosmonauts from the Pleiades star cluster between 1975 and 1978 is perhaps the most elaborately documented contactee case in the literature of ufology. For Meier supported his story not only with a mass of photographs but with samples of metal allegedly given him by the Pleiadeans, with tape recordings of their craft in flight, and, according to Colonel Wendelle Stevens (who first investigated the affair), produced other witnesses to the remarkable events that he described. All this evidence was, Stevens says, subjected to rigorous scientific testing – and was passed as authentic. The results of Stevens's investigation were published in the United States in 1979 in a lavish book called *UFO . . . contact with the Pleiades.*

Material that has surfaced since then, together with further revelations by the seemingly irrepressible Billy Meier, may



Below: one of the outmoded Variation Type-1 spacecraft

lead one to wonder just what Meier's purpose is in all this. For his story has now become so bizarre that even the most gullible devotee of the extra-terrestrial hypothesis ought to be feeling just the teeniest twinges of doubt. And that is without knowing the results of the independent scientific tests of the evidence that have been carried out.

The most startling of Meier's later claims is to have been taken in one of the Pleiadean spacecraft (known as Variation Type-4, apparently) on a journey through time. On this trip, says Meier, he went back to the age of the dinosaurs and photographed them; he also visited Jesus Christ, who was so impressed with Meier that he appointed him a disciple. Meier says he returned to this day and age in order to avoid being crucified. He also claims to have visited other planets, to have photographed the link-up between the Apollo and Soyuz spacecraft as he flew by (odd that neither NASA nor the Russians seemed aware of the Pleiadeans flitting past), and, most extravagant of all, to have taken a photograph of the eye of God. Meier also was taken into the future by the Pleiadeans to see San Francisco come to a sticky end, sinking into the bay as the San Andreas fault at last produced its much-heralded catastrophe.

These tales have naturally attracted some laughter, and Meier's responses to his critics have scarcely helped his case. When asked why he failed to photograph both eyes of God, for example, he replied that the other was closed: the Lord was winking at his companion (who was, needless to say, the shapely Pleiadean Semjase). Other 'evidence' is so peculiar as to need no comment – such as the photograph of a pterodactyl that shows a pyramid in the background!

As Meier's defenders – mainly the group known as Genesis III, who published Colonel Stevens's book on the Meier case – have attempted to come to the rescue, they too have fallen into confusion and contradiction. Or perhaps worse. The chief critic of the Meier case has been Kal Korff, and the title of his book on the subject sums up his attitude more than adequately: *The most infamous hoax in ufology.*

One instance of self-contradiction on the part of Meier and his defenders concerns a sequence of photographs purporting to show a Pleiadean spacecraft circling a tree. An

Above: a spacecraft circles a tree in this sequence shot by Meier. In other frames, the tree's top is alleged to move, owing to the 'force' of the craft. But according to hostile photographic analysts, the pictures are the result of superimposing the UFO and tree images onto the background sequence. The cloud patterns could not have changed so much, they say, in the short time that the UFO was allegedly circling the tree

unfortunate aspect of this series is that when independent investigators visited the site, no tree was to be found. Meier's explanation for this was that the spacecraft had subsequently disintegrated the hapless arboreal specimen. When taxed with the same question, Wendelle Stevens told Korff that the tree vanished because it had been teleported into 'another time frame'. Kal Korff's suspicion is that neither of these things happened, since a close look at the pictures – reputedly taken within a few seconds of one another – reveals markedly different cloud patterns from frame to frame. Genesis III's claim that the day in question was particularly windy is not borne out by the weather record, which shows wind speeds reaching a maximum of 15 miles per hour (25 km/h). Korff reasons that a model UFO and model tree were superimposed on pictures of the site. And indeed models of the Pleiadean craft have been found on the Meier farm – though Meier says that they were inspired by his actual encounters.

Possibly the least plausible of Meier's defenders is Jim Dilettoso, of Genesis III. Kal Korff prints a long interview with him (and dismantles most of his statements) in which he says that in the 1950s Wendelle Stevens and another ufologist, Richard Miller, performed something called 'transchannelling' on aliens for the US Air Force:

> They would fly up to Alaska because they were told that the magnetic fields there were proper for resonance induction, and we have hundreds and hundreds of audio recordings of Richard and other CIA officers doing transchannelings of aliens. . . . Two of those CIA officers . . . have developed serious personality aberrations.

Asked why, Dilettoso replied:

> . . . it seems like something consistent in people that do channeling . . . that their cell-salt structures change, and they develop diabetes.
>
> There's also studies done that the last two Popes developed diabetes, as do a lot of Eastern gurus. So what's the correlation between transchanneling

and cell-salts and diabetes, then diabetes going unchecked, developing into other neurotic and schizophrenic . . . behaviors that usually show up as olfactory and motor sense disturbances like Parkinson's disease. It's not where they become schizophrenic where their thinking is impaired, but where their body reactions are affected, and Billy [Meier] shows signs of that also. . . .

But that seems consistent in the, oh . . . some thousand contactee cases that are being studied. In that the vibrating field put out by the ship and by the beings themselves *dominates* the aura, the magnetic field that can be kirlian photographed, dominates it so much, that it appears to even get down and start reprogramming the DNA.

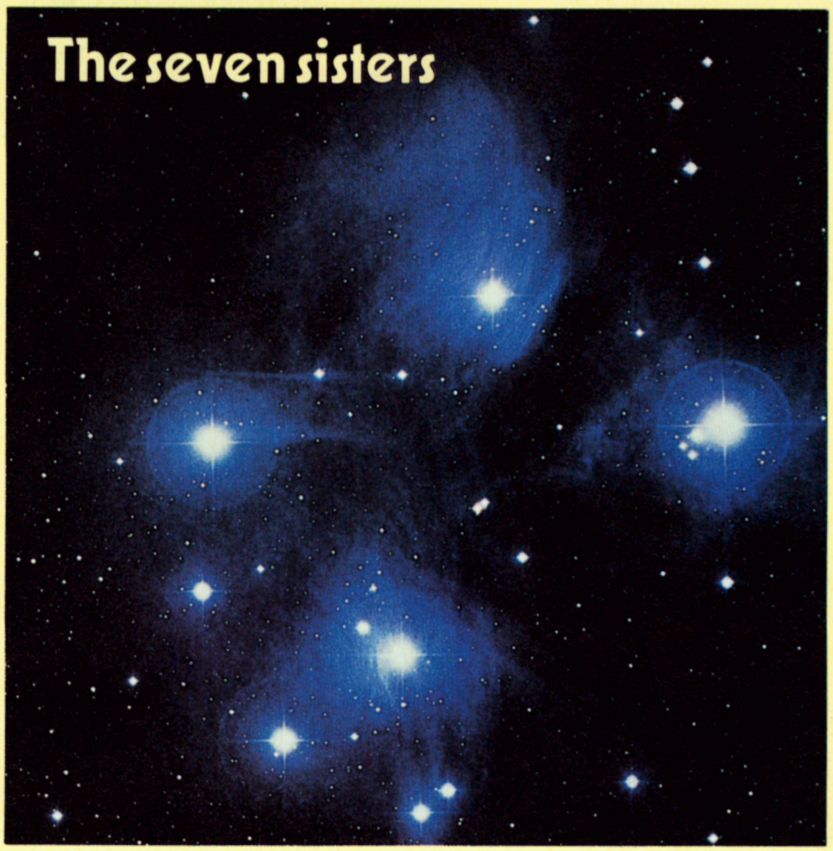
One may be forgiven for suspecting that Stevens, and his associates who make up Genesis III, did start by believing Meier and accepting his evidence at face value. Then, embarrassed by the jeers, laughter and protests of more painstaking ufologists, they were forced into defending their lost cause. Meier, however, has simply continued to make ever more extravagant comments – not, perhaps, without a certain impish humour – which Genesis III have tumbled over themselves to make respectable. The results, after the fashion of tumbling, bear a close resemblance to slapstick, however. The paucity of photographs of the Pleiadeans themselves is explained by Wendelle Stevens thus: 'They are afraid of being hurt . . . they do not want to be recognised. Supposedly, they do walk the streets in Europe and don't wish to be compromised.' Billy Meier, on the other hand, has happily admitted the strong resemblance between Semjase and his own girlfriend – so who is really worried about being recognised on the streets of Europe?

A spacecraft hovers in the distant sky beyond the tripod-mounted camera. The telepathic promptings that Meier received before each encounter enabled him to come to it well-prepared with such photographic equipment as he possessed – which, however, was somewhat inadequate to the world-shaking nature of these events

Less edifying are the claims made by Meier and Genesis III concerning the samples of metal and crystal given Meier by the Pleiadeans as examples of their technological wizardry. Meier actually produced these while Stevens and his team were in Switzerland. They called on him one morning and were told that he had had his 105th contact during the night and 'had a surprise' for the investigators. This turned out to be a package, handed over by the cosmonaut Quetzal, of four metal, one biological and nine mineral and crystal specimens. According to the book, the scientists who conducted 'in-depth, highly sophisticated examination' of these samples found them to have unique qualities and said they had 'never seen anything like it before'. The level of purity in the metal was 'not immediately explainable' while the general characteristics 'seemed to indicate a non-electrolytic, cold fusion synthesis process not generally known to earth technology'.

Kal Korff found rather less to be excited about. He interviewed Dr Marcel Vogel, who had analysed the samples for Genesis III – and had drawn rather different conclusions

The seven sisters



The Pleiades (left), the star cluster that is the home of the space people with whom Billy Meier claims to meet so regularly. The haze of gas and dust indicates the comparative youth of the cluster, for as the group matures the interstellar matter will disperse. The few hundred stars of the cluster were born together a mere 60 million years ago – by contrast with the 5000 million years of the Sun's existence to date. This time is too short to have permitted the formation of any planets, or the appearance of indigenous life. According to Meier, the space people migrated to the Pleiades from their original home in the constellation of Lyra. But how do they survive there? Is Erra, their supposed home, an artificial planet constructed by the migrants?

The Pleiades of Greek myth were seven sisters, named Alcyone, Asterope, Electra, Celaeno, Maia, Merope and Taygeta. They were daughters of Atlas and Pleione. As it happens, the leader of the migration from Lyra was called Pleione, according to Meier. Was the mythical name a faint memory of the space traveller? Or was the space traveller's name suggested to Meier by the half-remembered mythical name?

from those published in the book. Only the first sample was unique, said Dr Vogel, consisting of aluminium, silver and thulium, each having a high degree of purity. The other samples were ordinary crystals of quartz, citrine, amethyst and silver solder, and there is no reason to believe they are of extra-terrestrial origin. Jim Dilettoso characteristically failed to further the cause by claiming that Genesis III hold a 10-hour videotape of 'the entire lab proceedings' (which Dr Vogel denies having made). 'And,' Dilettoso incautiously persisted, 'we have about an hour of him discussing why the metal samples are not possible in earth technology, going into intrinsic detail of why it is not done anywhere on earth, that type of chemistry.' Of course, Dr Vogel may not be the only scientist to have analysed the samples (no mention is made by either party of the biological specimen), but then Genesis III are notably coy about naming any of the 200 scientists they say have verified Meier's remarkable story.

They are no less reticent about the numerous other witnesses who, they say, saw – and in some cases photographed – the Pleiadean craft skimming around the Swiss valleys. No other photographs have surfaced, none are printed in the book, and none of these other witnesses are named. The best the book offers is a number of photographs of unidentified people sitting around Billy Meier's dining table and the assertion that tapes of conversations with the witnesses were subjected to psychological stress evaluation (PSE). The pictures by themselves prove absolutely nothing, while PSE is a notoriously unreliable method of lie detection, despite Genesis III's talk of 'special computers standing by in northern California' to perform the analysis.

Genesis III do not mention any analysis of the notes made by Meier of his contacts with the Pleiadeans. But Jim Lorenzen of APRO quotes Dr James Hurtak, a language specialist who has taken the opportunity to read most of the 3000 pages of the 'Semjase correspondence' in the original German. 'The linguistic use of Egyptian-Aramaic and Egyptian-Hebrew names . . . is "latterday patchwork",' he says. 'All this shifting play of correspondences by which everything . . . is cheated of its individual logic creates a mood of pensive jesting . . . and even sublime travesty. By all the standards of genuine "ancient knowledge" . . . this civilisation which lays claim to being 3000 years into the future has not offered much in the way of a quantum jump over what our ancestors had 5000 years ago (in the way of intellectual transformation).'

'The aliens gave Meier the most sought after prize of all – wisdom,' remarks Kal Korff, adding: 'It was very basic wisdom indeed.' Certainly, reading through the pronouncements on life, the Universe and everything that Semjase condescended to give Meier (see page 1561), one is embarrassed by their half-familier triviality.

But of all the evidence produced by Meier, none is as controversial as his photographs of Pleiadean spacecraft.

On page 1614: how Genesis III evaluated the photographs – and what others had to say

Above: witnesses pose for Meier's camera – seemingly too blasé about spacecraft to heed the hovering disc

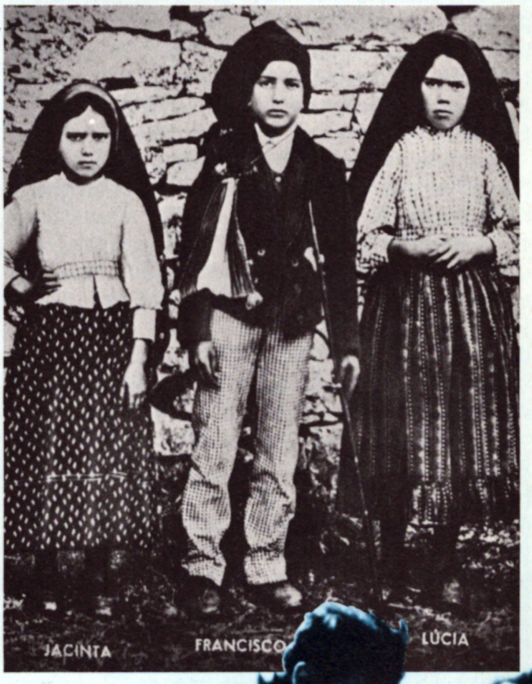
Below: the fortunate Meier merits visits by whole squadrons of spacecraft

Out of the mouth of babes

The Virgin Mary, it is claimed, has appeared many times in the 20th century, mostly to children – and frequently bearing warnings of apocalyptic disasters to come. KEVIN McCLURE examines the background to these visions

THE VISIONARY EVENTS at La Salette and Lourdes in France, at Knock in Ireland and at Llanthony in Wales all happened in the 19th century. The first three sites have become major centres of pilgrimage, but Llanthony is nearly forgotten – perhaps because of inaccessibility, or because there is no Catholic tradition in Wales. In three of the reports it was claimed that healing accompanied the vision. Three of the cases prominently featured children. Two of the figures spoke and prophesied – two did not. There are marked similarities among the descriptions of the figures in all these cases. And in all of them the experience is reported as having had a lasting effect on the witnesses.

The 20th century has seen no abatement in the frequency of visions, nor in their complexity; modern photographic and recording techniques have, in fact, made them much more thoroughly known by an eager audience of believers. Our second group of cases are spread even further geographically – from Spain to the United States – but they have many features that resemble those in the earlier reports. In all four, the visionary figure speaks, and in three there is extensive prophecy. The figure seen is apparently much the same in all the cases and healings



One of the most famous modern visions was that at Fatima, Portugal, in 1917, in which three children, Jacinta, Francisco and Lucia (right), saw and spoke with 'the Lady of the Rosary'. Thousands of people witnessed extraordinary phenomena while the children apparently spoke to 'the Lady' every month for six months. Fatima is now a centre of pilgrimage (below)

are claimed in all of them. In the three major cases of the four, the original and prominent witnesses are children.

The apparently miraculous events at Fatima, Portugal, in 1917 are well-known, particularly for the 'Dance of the Sun' that ended the last vision in the series of six, and for the mystery surrounding the prophecies said to have been given by the Virgin to the young witnesses – Lucia dos Santos, aged nine, Francisco Marto, aged eight, and his sister Jacinta, aged six. They were looking after sheep just outside Fatima when they saw the apparition of a boy 'aged about 15' who exhorted them to pray. The 'angel', as they called him, appeared to them twice more that year, but it is the series of events that began on 13 May 1917 that has made Fatima world famous.

From out of a clear sky . . .

The three children were once again out tending their families' flocks when a flash of lightning – in a clear sky – sent them scurrying for shelter. But no rain came; instead they saw an apparition of a beautiful young woman, aged about 18. Lucia talked to her while Jacinta looked on. The vision said she had come from heaven and that she would reappear on the 13th of every month for a period of six months.

The children agreed that they would keep the story of the vision to themselves, but when they got home Jacinta blurted it out. The news predictably spread like wildfire, and soon crowds gathered outside Fatima on the 13th of every month.

The vision was seen – although only by the three children – every month from May to September, while the attendant crowds grew. On 13 October some 70,000 people were present when the phenomenon that came to be known as the 'Dance of the Sun' took place – although by no means all of them saw it. It has been described thus in a Catholic pamphlet:

> The rain stopped suddenly, and through a rift, or hole, in the clouds the sun was seen like a silvery disc. It then seemed to rotate, paused, and rotated a second or third time, emitting rays of various colours. Then it seemed to approach the earth, radiating a red light, and an intense heat. The crowd fell into a panic, thinking the world was ending, and then into tumultuous devotion.

It is unfortunate that the only photographs said to have been taken at this event appear to be fakes; certainly they are less than convincing.

The figure itself was described as: 'A beautiful Lady, who seemed to be less than 18 years old. She wore a white robe, and her head was covered with a white veil. Her hands, clasped in prayer, held a rosary.'

The matter of the prophecies is most intriguing. The first two, supposedly given

Above: pilgrims at the shrine at Beauraing, Belgium, which was built in the 1930s after five children (right) from two poor families claimed to have seen and spoken with the Virgin 33 times. Despite the number of alleged communications, the 'Lady' said little of any consequence. But even so, the story of the visions seems to have answered a deep need among Catholics, who flock to the shrine in great numbers

to the child Lucia in 1917, are the less convincing for being revealed *after* their alleged fulfilment, in 1936 and 1941, but the third prophecy of Fatima remains one of the great mysteries. Said to have been given to Lucia on 13 July 1917, it was passed in secrecy to the Vatican, and is said to have been opened in secrecy by the Pope in either 1942 or 1960. Contrary to Lucia's apparent instructions, no official information has been given as to what it contains, but journalists and religious extremists have made a variety of guesses.

Purportedly, it refers to appalling, worldwide war in the latter half of this century, to division within the Church, to the rise of Satan, and to the only gradual victory of Christ. There is a rumour that in 1977 Christ himself appeared to an anonymous Catholic to state that the secret 'must be known by all by now', and clearly there is a widespread feeling that the facts – if facts there be – are being wilfully withheld.

The visions at Beauraing, Belgium, which

Top: the valley in which lies the Spanish village of Garabandal where, in 1961, four young children (above) began to see visions of angels – which, they were told, heralded the vision of the Virgin herself. She is said to have appeared an astonishing 2000 times over a four-year period; sometimes she was accompanied by angels – and once by what the children described as 'the eye of God'. During their visions they became entranced, parading about in 'ecstatic marches' or falling backwards in perfect synchronisation. Yet one of the children, Maria Cruz Gonzales, has since confessed that some of her 'trances' were fakes

lasted from November 1932 to January 1933, introduced some new elements to the subject of the Marian visions. They were witnessed by, and only by, five children from two poor families, aged from 9 to 15. Thirty-three visions were said to have been seen and, although there was no independent verification, some of the visions were attended by very large crowds indeed. One fairly objective account tells of the first vision:

> On 29 November 1932 four children at Beauraing went to meet a friend from her convent school. After praying in a Lourdes Grotto in the garden of the convent, one of them rang the doorbell. They all waited, expecting one of the sisters to open the door. Suddenly, as Andrée was looking towards the viaduct, she cried out, 'I see the light.' 'It must be the headlight of a car,' answered one of the other children. All looked in the direction of the source of the light. 'Something is moving there – is it a man or what?' they asked each other. Then Albert Voisin shouted, 'This is the Blessed Virgin.' All looked again, and all were convinced that it was the Blessed Virgin walking on the bridge. . . . This was the beginning of the 33 apparitions . . . at one time 30,000 people crowded around the site during the apparition, though only the children were favoured.

One of the new elements at Beauraing was the depth of investigation relating to the claimed visions – including tests of the children's trance state using lighted matches and a penknife that seem to have demonstrated genuineness. Lengthy, learned and unconvinced accounts of the events were recorded by the Catholic historians Herbert Thurston and Jean Helle. The visions were also used as propaganda in battles in national and Church politics.

Thurston and Helle's description of the Lady is quite standard.

> They saw her shining form as she stood on what appeared to be a small cloud. Her white dress seemed to be touched with reflections of blue light, and her hair was covered by a white mantle. From her head came short rays of light, which gave the appearance of a crown. Her hands were joined, and she was looking towards heaven.

One of the children claimed that the vision revealed her golden heart to her, but despite a continued stress on the significance of the Immaculate Conception, there was little meaning in what the figure had to say. Nonetheless, huge crowds were drawn who were prepared to accept the children's word about the vision, planted as it was firmly in the tradition of Lourdes. Though independent commentators had serious doubts, and there was little objective evidence, believers continued to flock to Beauraing.

A series of visions more plausible to both the serious researcher and the Church commenced at Garabandal, a small village in north-west Spain, on 18 June 1961. Again, four young children, all girls aged 11 and 12, were the only witnesses to the Lady herself. She spoke at length and in detail, with prophecy and admonition. Astonishingly, the figure is said to have appeared to the children some 2000 times in four years. Considerable evidence exists of related healings – including one restoration of sight. The village has since become a major centre of pilgrimage.

The events commenced with nine appearances of an angel, warning the children that the Virgin would appear to them as 'Our Lady of Carmel'. Thus, even for the Virgin's first appearance, there were many witnesses present. 'Before the children . . . the Virgin appeared with two angels, one on each side.

Above the Virgin was a large eye that seemed to the children to be the eye of God.' They later described her:

> She has a white dress, a blue cape, a crown of golden stars. She holds between her fine slender hands a brown scapular [cloak] except when she carries the Child in her arms. She has long chestnut hair with a parting in the middle. Her face is oval with a very delicate nose, a very pretty mouth with well-traced lips. She appears to be 18, and is on the tall side.

The children, from their photographs, look cheerful and sensible enough. Yet while they saw the visions and spoke with the Lady, countless numbers of pilgrims and others watched them, and the doctors and investigators got on with their own peculiar duties. But the children seem to have been in genuine ecstatic trances, and were oblivious to intrusions into their communication. They were apt to fall backwards (as do many subjects of conversion, faith healing and exorcism), sometimes together as if synchronised, or to link arms and parade backwards and forwards in 'ecstatic marches'.

The messages were similar to those given at Fatima. They consist mainly of threats, warnings and expressions of concern. A sequence of events is outlined: that there will first be a warning, of which everyone on Earth will be aware, then a miracle will occur at Garabandal – of which Conchita, one of the witnesses, now living in the USA, will give eight days' warning. As a result of this miracle the USSR will be converted wholesale to Christianity, and a 'permanent supernatural sign will remain until the end of time'. If the world does not then repent, the chastisement will follow.

Unfortunately, one of the children, Maria Cruz Gonzales, has since told interviewers that some of their 'ecstasies' were certainly faked, adding that they used them as a ruse to get away from the town to play. The others, however, have always maintained that their visions and trances were genuine.

Since 1970 Veronica Leuken, the 'Bayside seeress' from New York, has claimed she has had visions of the Virgin, who blessed her Polaroid camera so that it takes pictures with strange effects (bottom), especially the appearance of the so-called 'Ball of Redemption' (below). Critics, however, think it resembles a thumb over the lens. Veronica claims the Virgin imparts warnings and prophecies concerned with the laxity of morals in the modern world and the threat of 'satanic' influence on the Church. But no known prophecies concern specific events

This is not the place to enter into a detailed discussion of the various cases of visionary experience we have considered. A number of the arguments for and against accepting them at face value will have become apparent, as, too, will have the very simple beginnings onto which faith, enthusiasm, need and hardship have grafted a complex and dramatic superstructure in cases such as Lourdes and Beauraing. The consistent and yet inconstant appearance of the Virgin herself – changing in age, perhaps according to the age of the witness, and changing in title and characteristics according to the need and the situation – gives an impression that the visions may be only different versions of a similar psychological archetype; there may be no objective reality to all or any of the figures. But against this we have to balance the fact that most of the visions have been seen by unsophisticated, young children, apparently unprompted; can we really expect them to come up with such consistent, sophisticated stories? Also there is the matter of the many healings, and the prophecies – can a psychological illusion have such effects? Can it prophesy future events in detail and, as at La Salette, with accuracy?

Of course, there are no simple answers. But the evidence of thousands of witnesses points to the fact that something unusual has occurred at such places as Fatima and Lourdes – perhaps they were genuine visitations from Mary, the Mother of Christ. Certainly until we have a great deal more evidence – evidence we may never obtain – we are in no position to decry or dismiss any sincerely held belief based on these undoubtedly inspiring experiences.

An ear to the ground

What is the truth behind the tales that megaliths have paranormal powers? Can scientific measurement reveal the nature of their mysterious energy? PAUL DEVEREUX describes some experiments – and their startling results

LEY HUNTERS, DOWSERS and 'earth mysteries' researchers in general have long talked of an 'earth energy' – a supposed 'telluric current' that manifests itself at standing stones in particular, indicating that the ancients knew of its presence even if we are no longer, in general, aware of it.

The folklore relating to the old stones says that they possess unusual properties: they are the abode of spirits, they have supernatural powers of movement, they can heal, and they can bring down storms. Psychometrists have reported visions at ancient sites in which they see the stones being used as instruments for Druidic rites employing cosmic energies. There are also substantial numbers of accounts of apparently sane, reliable people sometimes receiving alarming sensations when touching megaliths – particularly sensations of tingling or shock.

And, just occasionally, there are dramatic events that draw public attention to the possibility that earth energies exist. One of these was the extraordinary geophysical display that centred on Arthur's Table mountain in the Berwyn range, mid Wales, on 23 January 1974. The full sequence of events is uncertain to this day, but there are clear reports of certain phenomena. An explosion and earth tremor were experienced in the vicinity of Arthur's Table during the evening: the explosion was heard over a radius of 60 miles (100 kilometres); the tremor was recorded on sensitive equipment by the seismographic unit in Edinburgh. Before the event, curious fireballs were seen both locally and nationwide. A blue ball of light was seen by an astronomer to be streaking westwards through the East Anglian skies, and it was observed disappearing over mid Wales. A white fireball was seen travelling south over the Isle of Man – again in the direction of Wales. Reports came in of multi-coloured lights over the Bristol Channel. From Llandrillo, the village at the foot of Arthur's Table, came accounts of red discs of light seen flying around the slopes some hours before the tremor.

It was generally assumed that an enormous meteorite had crashed into the Berwyn mountains. Police teams were sent up the slopes to see if anyone had been injured. Scientists came to search for the immense scar they expected to find on the mountainside, and to collect meteoric debris. But no evidence of a meteoric impact was detectable. The sequence of events became as mysterious as it was dramatic, and the whole matter disappeared from the headlines. It was, it seemed, another facet of nature that didn't fit into the neat theories of modern science.

But researchers into earth mysteries subjects noted one thing very clearly: on the slopes of Arthur's Table is Moel Ty Uchaf, one of the best-preserved stone circles in the British Isles. It is adjacent to one of Britain's most deep-rooted geological faults – the Bala fault.

Such strange events, along with the age-old legends and the claims from psychics and dowsers, have created a persistent idea of strange energies in the earth being harnessed by the megalith builders. To this speculation were added the findings of physicists at the

Moel Ty Uchaf, one of the best-preserved stone circles in the British Isles, situated on the slopes of Arthur's Table in the Berwyn mountains in mid Wales. On 23 January 1974 Arthur's Table was the site of an explosion so powerful that it was registered on seismographic equipment as far away as Edinburgh. Some experts have suggested that megalithic sites are situated on spots where geomagnetic energy is concentrated. Could this energy have been responsible for the Arthur's Table explosion?

This painting by the Irish nature mystic 'A.E.' – G.W. Russell – shows his impression of the energy field and spirits surrounding a dolmen. Folklore is full of stories about the supernatural nature of standing stones; one of the main aims of the Dragon Project, set up in 1977 to investigate ley sites, is to discover whether there are any scientifically measurable anomalies at these locations

Crickhowell megalith, where magnetic anomalies were discovered (see page 557). It was in an attempt to clarify this confused mass of information that the Dragon Project was brought into being in late 1977 (see page 1578).

While the considerable psychic and dowsing work already undertaken at megalithic sites provides the project's 'psychic archaeology' programme with a precedent on which to base itself, the physical programme has had to be an enormous pioneering effort. Its starting point was ultrasound – sound of a frequency beyond the range of normal human hearing. Some years before the beginning of the project, a zoologist had reported to *The Ley Hunter* magazine that a colleague of his had, while using ultrasonic detection equipment in a study of bats, noted ultrasonic emissions from 'a site you would call a ley point' – for which he could find no explanation. A similar anecdote came from researcher John Barnatt, who was approached by a stranger while surveying the Derbyshire henge of Arbor Low. This man mentioned that the skylarks singing overhead appeared to be attracted by ultrasound emitted by the stones. The Dragon Project's physical programme provided as good an opportunity as there would ever be for investigating such curious reports. In the months following the instigation of the project, limited funds were raised, experts were sought for consultancy in various spheres, and an ultrasonic detector was built by one of the project's electronic engineers.

So it was that, one grey October morning in 1978, the chief consultant for the physical programme, Dr. G. V. Robins, an inorganic chemist, found himself wandering around the Dragon Project's main field base – the Rollright Stones in Oxfordshire – carrying an ultrasonic detector. Disappointingly, the detector registered nothing. But the zoologist whose experiences were reported in *The Ley Hunter* had apparently detected emissions around dawn. So Robins tried again a fortnight later, this time arriving at Rollright some time before first light. An hour before dawn, and still nothing had registered. But, half an hour before sunrise, the needle on the instrument's dial sprang to life. In two-second pulses, *something* was stimulating the detector.

Dawn flickers

It was from such mystifying results that the physical programme developed. With the assistance of volunteer monitors more ultrasonic emissions were recorded at Rollright, at the Castlerigg circle in Cumbria, at Avebury henge in Wiltshire and, to a lesser degree, at random sarsen stones from which the outer circle of Stonehenge was constructed. At control locations, such as concrete trigonometrical points on hills, no reaction was obtained. But it has been at Rollright that most of the work has been carried out. Sometimes no response was to be had on the detector; at other times the needle flickered dramatically. Two periods before dawn – about 30 minutes on some occasions and approximately 10 minutes on others – were the times when the instrument would most often spring to life. The effect would then last up to an hour or two after sunrise before fading away. Few responses were obtained during daytime and only apparently random 'spikes' of activity at night. The equinoxes provided more positive results than did the solstices. Preliminary correlations suggest that lunar phase and sunspot cycles may in some way be related to the apparent incidence of ultrasonic emissions.

If there is ultrasound at the old stones, how is it generated? Robins, who is also involved with advanced orthodox work on what could be termed the energy states of stone, has made a cautious hypothesis – and, at this stage, it is nothing more. Could it be

The stone circle of Arbor Low, Derbyshire. Skylarks singing overhead appeared to be attracted by ultrasound emitted by the stones – which led the Dragon Project to monitor megalithic sites with an ultrasonic detector

that microwave energy from the Sun is exciting the electron population in the lattice structure of the stones, causing a transduction of energy through the lattice that manifests as a pressure wave – namely, ultrasound? It is theoretically possible, but the Dragon Project has not yet been able to obtain sufficiently sensitive ultrasonic detection equipment to test the idea at a stone circle. In 1980 and 1981 three additional types of ultrasonic detector were tried out, and two of these also picked up what appeared to be ultrasonic signals. Obviously, the accuracy of the experimental results must depend on the sensitivity of the transducer and the frequency at which the instrument is set, so it must be calibrated properly.

Above: Dr G.V. Robins, chief consultant for the Dragon Project's physical programme, tests an ultrasonic detector at the Rollright Stones, Oxfordshire. The detector registered pulses of ultrasound at several different sites in the period just before dawn

Right: Roy Cooper, local co-ordinator of the Dragon Project, monitors the Rollright Stones with a Geiger counter. Strongly localised areas of high Geiger counts have been found at many megalithic sites throughout the British Isles – but not at the control locations the Dragon Project has also monitored

Sound that heals

If ultrasound *does* occur at stone circles, then it is possible that the geometry noted in stone circle layouts may somehow enhance this probably natural effect. The purpose to which the ultrasound was put is unknown, but it is worth noting that modern research has shown that ultrasonics can be used beneficially in healing human tissue and also in the enhancement of seed germination. The healing and fecundity legends associated with megaliths spring immediately to mind.

Another aspect of research upon which the Dragon Project's physical programme embarked was the use of Geiger counters. This was, again, triggered by an accidental observation: a few days after the Moel Ty Uchaf events in 1974, the geometer and architectural researcher Keith Critchlow happened to be surveying the site. While he was talking to a couple of scientists who were looking for evidence of a meteorite, it was noted that a Geiger counter casually switched on was recording a remarkably high count. This was apparently assumed to be an instrument malfunction, but when Dragon Project researchers heard of this story they felt such an anomaly was worth a closer look, and by the beginning of 1980 intensive Geiger readings were being taken as part of the programme. But it was only with the end of the 1981 session that the remarkable findings that had been obtained were fully analysed. Many readings had to be taken at locations in and around the Rollright Stones, at other sites and in dozens of non-megalithic 'control' locations before deviations from a background norm could be clearly identified.

The picture that is now emerging is startling. Highly localised spots of high Geiger counts have been identified at Rollright, at Moel Ty Uchaf and at megalithic sites near the Boyne river and Loughcrew mountains in Ireland. The circle at Rollright yields, most of the time, normal background counts, but on rare occasions certain points within it register sudden surges in Geiger readings. One day in August 1981, one of the identified 'hotspots' just outside the Rollright circle

yielded more counts per minute than when the Geiger counter was placed less than a yard from a radioactive isotope!

All these exceptional Geiger readings have so far been noted *only at or around megalithic sites*, and not at all at the control locations. It is known that uranium is present beneath some of the sacred sites of the North American Indians and the Australian aborigines. It *could* be that something similar is being discovered at prehistoric British sites.

On page 1606: the results of infra-red, radio and Kirlian monitoring of megalithic sites

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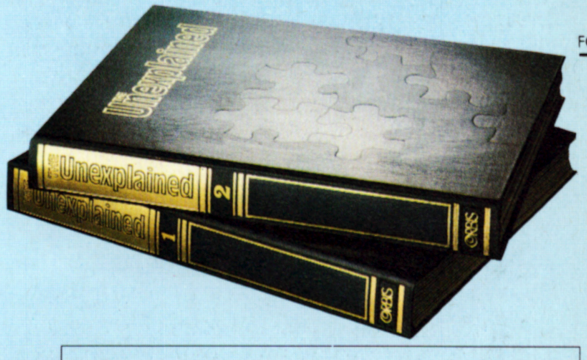

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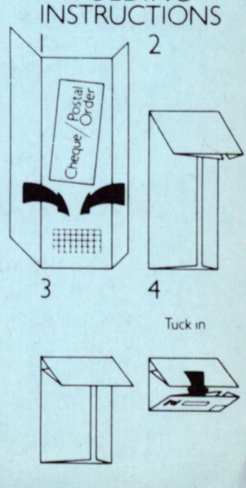

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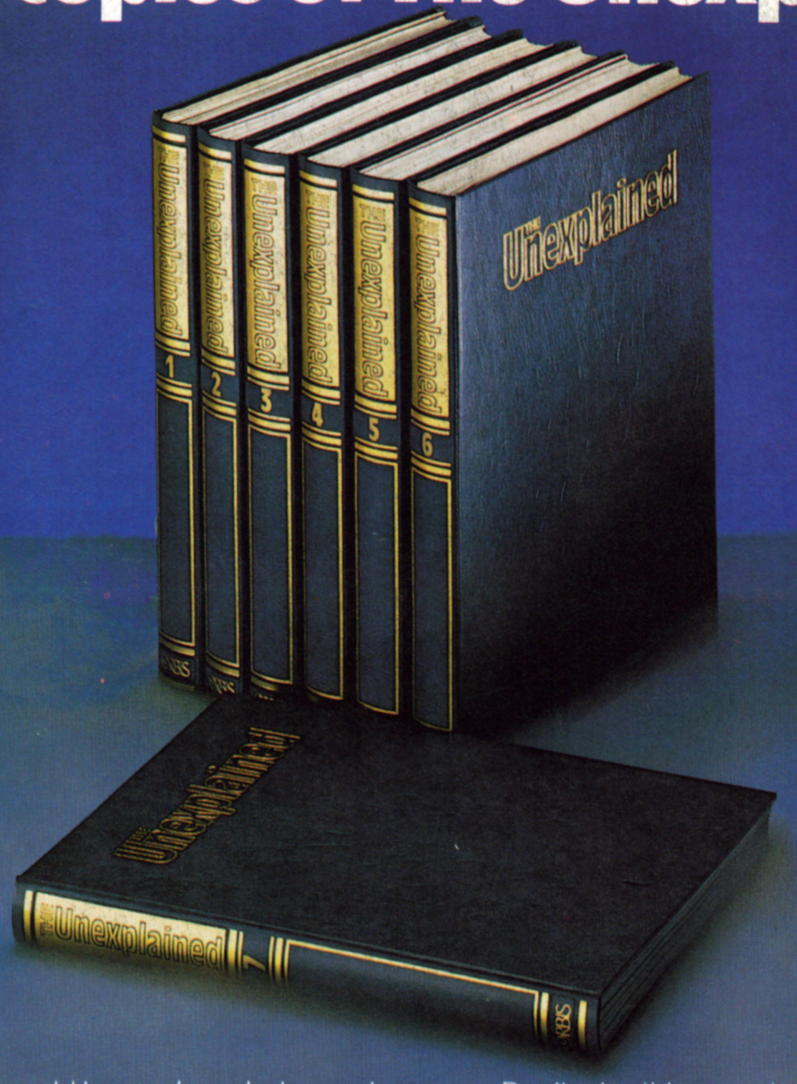

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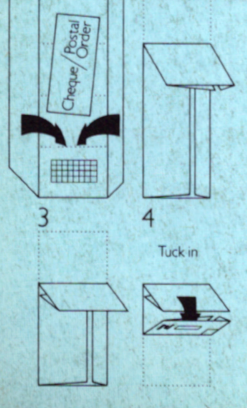

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